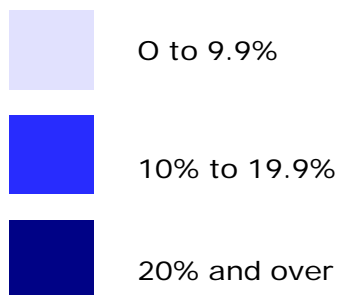
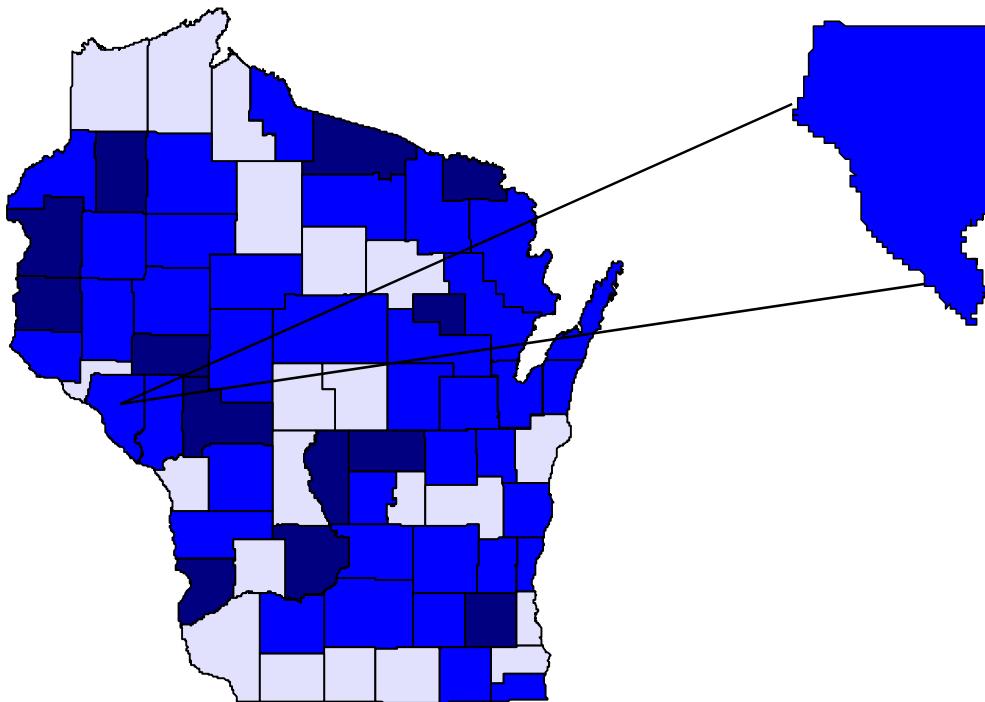


# Buffalo County Workforce Profile

Job Growth 1994 to 1999



Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development  
Division of Workforce Solutions  
Bureau of Workforce Information  
October 2001



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development

## Introduction

The County Workforce Profile has been developed by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) Bureau of Workforce Information (BWI) to provide a broad overview of Buffalo County's labor market. The data included in this fourth year of publication is for 1999 to maintain consistency with the previous publications and to provide the user with a single year of reference in order to draw comparisons and form a picture of related labor force and employment information.

A variety of economic and demographic labor market information have been provided to describe the current labor market conditions in the counties and regions of Wisconsin. That information includes 1999 data on population, labor force, industries, employment, wages and income. The narrative describes how local conditions have changed over one-year and five-year intervals. Although population information is available from the 2000 census, it is not included in this publication since the period of time selected for all data sets is 1999. For more recent releases of information please consult the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Labor Market Information website: <http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/lmi>.

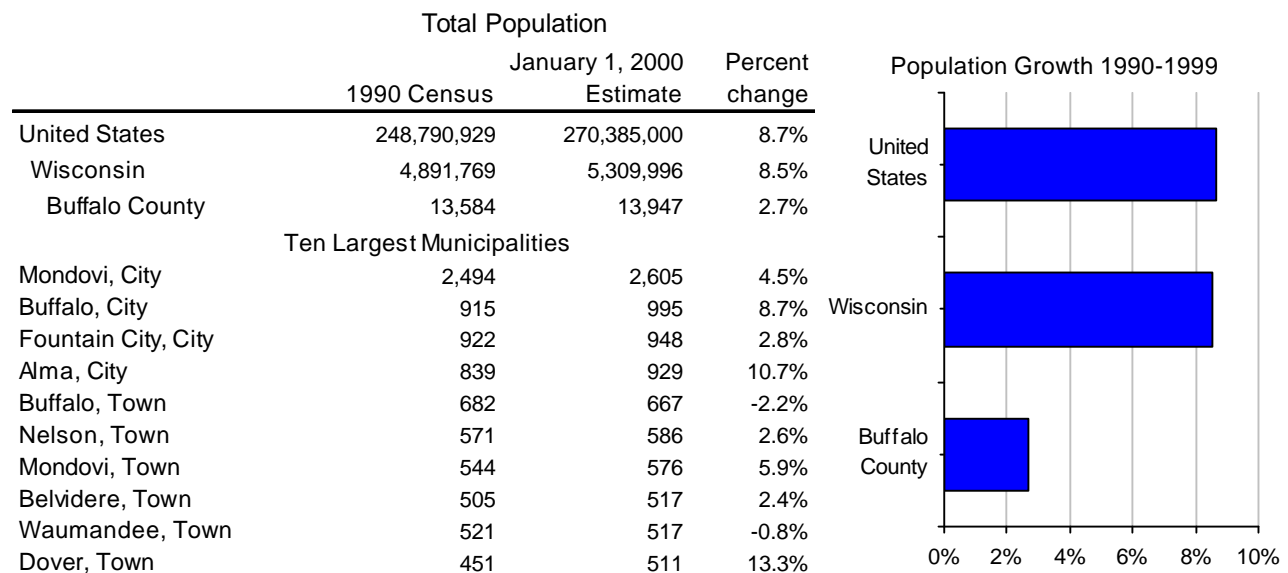
For more detailed information or clarification, please contact your local labor market analyst,  
Bill Brockmiller, by telephone (608-785-9337) or email ([brockwi@dwd.state.wi.us](mailto:brockwi@dwd.state.wi.us)).

DWD is an equal opportunity service provider. If you need assistance to access services or material in an alternate format, please contact the analyst listed above.

## Buffalo County Population and Civilian Labor Force

Buffalo County's population has increased 2.7 percent during the first nine years of the 1990s, a small increase for a county in which Nonfarm employment increased by almost 27 percent during the same time period. The City of Alma, located in west central Buffalo County - across the Mississippi River from Minnesota - is growing almost five times faster than Buffalo County as a whole. Alma accounted for 30 percent of the county's increase during the eight year time period.

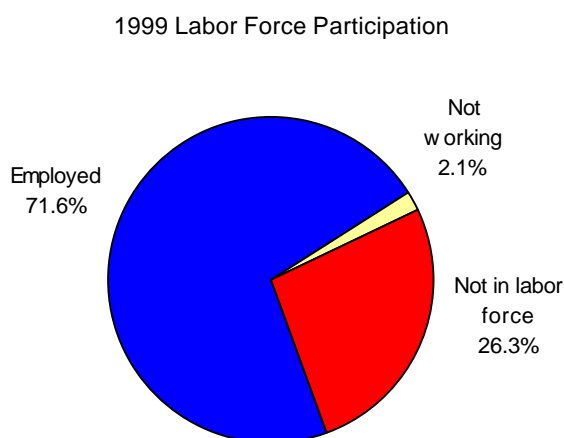
Population growth in Alma and along Buffalo's western border is partly attributable to increasing numbers living in Buffalo County Wisconsin but working across the river in Minnesota. In any area, population increases are due to two factors; net natural increase and net migration. Net in-migration accounted for about two-thirds of the population increase in Buffalo County during the 1990s decade.



\* Buffalo County portion only

Source: WI Dept. of Admin., Demographic Services Center, *Official Population Estimates*, January 1, 2000

The labor force is the sum of employed and unemployed persons who are 16 years old and older. Readers should keep in mind that people who are "not working" includes people who are "unemployed" and people who are "not in the labor force". "Unemployed" does not include all people who are "not working", some people who are not working are not technically unemployed. Examples of people who are not working but who are not unemployed are: retirees, fulltime students choosing not to work, persons with too many employment barriers to enter the work force, persons that have become discouraged and stopped looking for work, or other people who choose not to work or look for work. Persons in a prison, mental institution, or nursing home are not counted as members of the labor force, nor are they counted as unemployed. The pie chart displayed below provides estimates of employed, unemployed and those "not in the labor force" as a percentage of the civilian non-institutional population.



Source: Estimated from WI Dept of Administration population estimates, Jan 2000, US Census Bureau, and Local Area Unemployment Statistics

While the general population in Buffalo increased by 2.7 percent in the first eight years of the 1990s, the labor force aged population increased by a somewhat larger 4.7 percent. Of significance to employers is the change in population within different age cohorts. Employers dependent on a younger workforce have felt the pains of declining population levels in some age groups, most evident in Buffalo is the decline in the 25-39 age cohort.

Buffalo County's natural increase (births minus deaths) in population has been nominal. Population totals in the primary child rearing age cohort (25-39) continues to decline in Buffalo County. This age cohort (25-39) is among the most productive and most likely to work. Declines in this cohort present problems to employers recruiting from the Buffalo labor market area. In addition, while there has been a modest numerical increase in the 16-24 age cohort, it hasn't kept pace with

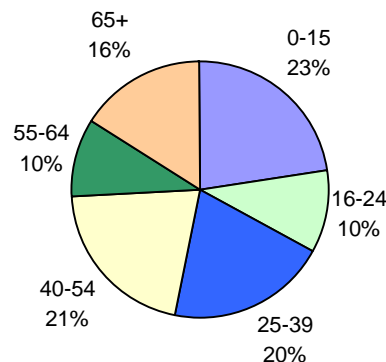
job growth in the area, compounding employer recruitment difficulties.

The substantial increase in population within the 40-54 age group has had, and will continue to have a sizeable effect on the recruitment and retention of workers.

Buffalo County Labor Force Age Population Distribution

Age Group	Population		Percent change
	1990 Census	1999 Estimate	
0-15	3,288	3,168	-3.6%
16-24	1,410	1,446	2.6%
25-39	3,138	2,777	-11.5%
40-54	2,172	2,930	34.9%
55-64	1,313	1,386	5.6%
65+	2,264	2,239	-1.1%

Source: Estimated from WI Dept of Admin, Demographic Services Center, Official Population Projections 1990-2020 and US Census Bureau

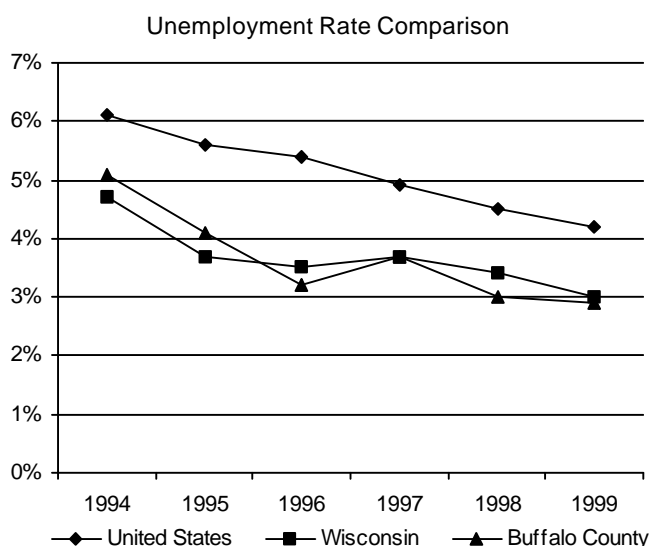


Buffalo County Civilian Labor Force Data

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Labor Force	7,700	7,700	8,000	8,100	8,000	7,800
Employed	7,300	7,400	7,700	7,800	7,800	7,600
Unemployed	390	320	260	300	240	230
Unemployment Rate	5.1%	4.1%	3.2%	3.7%	3.0%	2.9%

Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Unemployment rates are measured by the place of residence of workers. The unemployment rate for Buffalo County residents has continued to fall over the course of the five year time period 1994-1999. Jobs available on both sides of the Mississippi have continued to increase faster than Buffalo's population, pulling unemployment rates downward. Of the 363 additional residents added during the first nine years of the 90s decade in Buffalo, 127 were due to new births, and not yet available to work. Buffalo County has added 1,000 jobs during the same time period. Winona County Minnesota, where many Buffalo residents commute to daily for work, has also enjoyed growth. These factors have kept Buffalo's unemployment rates low.



During the course of a given year, Buffalo County's monthly unemployment rates report both high peaks and low valleys of unemployment. February usually reports the highest unemployment rate for the year in Buffalo County, the high is usually in February statewide as well. In recent history, Buffalo County's February rate has ran between 4.9 and 5.9 percent. In September Buffalo usually records its lowest rate for the year, recent September rates have ran between 1.7 and 2.7 percent.

Source: WIDWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

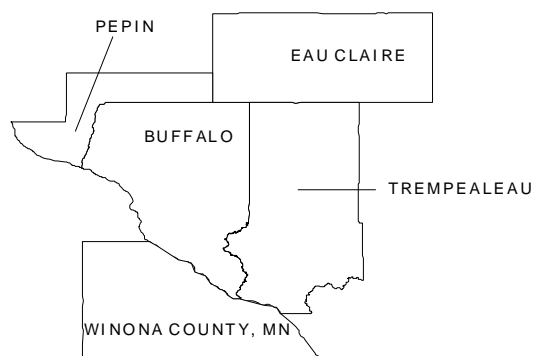
Unemployment rate patterns are roughly similar on a statewide basis. These patterns can be explained by several factors including; Wisconsin's weather patterns, farm growing seasons, Wisconsin manufacturers production schedules, shopping seasons peaks and valleys, and tourist seasons.

## Buffalo County Commuting Patterns

	Commute Into	Commute From	Net Commute
Minnesota, State of	1,420	89	-1,331
Pepin County	257	209	-48
Eau Claire County	279	296	17
Trempealeau County	489	119	-370
Elsewhere	197	112	-85
Total	2,642	825	-1,817

Work within Buffalo County

3,786

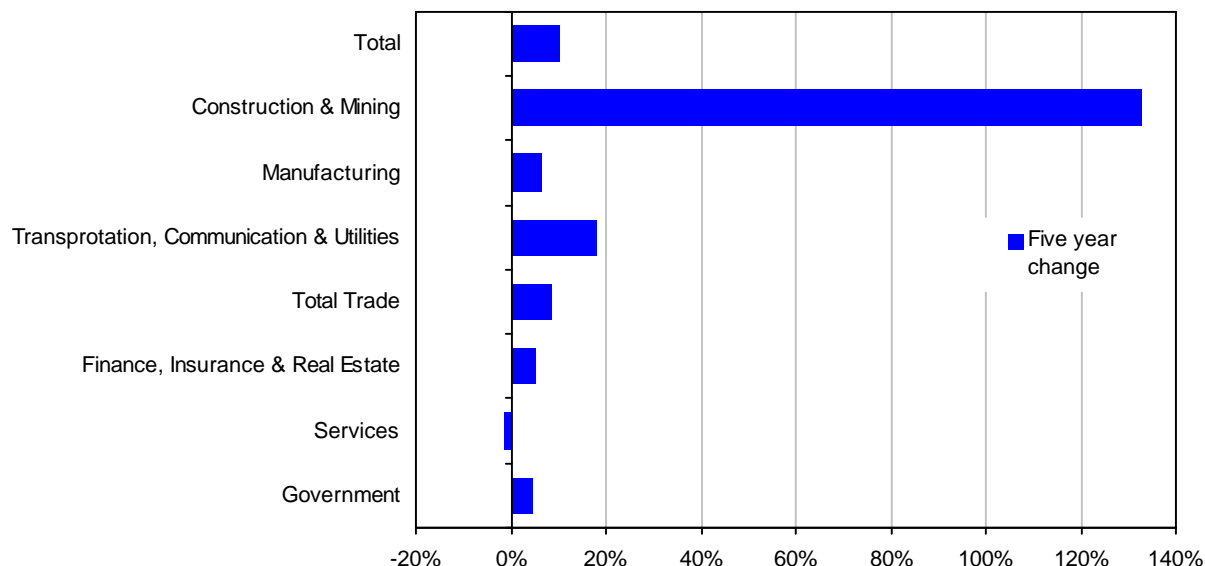


Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information. *Wisconsin's Commuting Patterns*, 1994.

Buffalo County workers are very mobile. As of the 1990 Census, over 40 percent of all employed Buffalo County residents work outside of the county. Minnesota is the destination for half the outbound commuters. Almost 20 percent travel to Trempealeau County.

Since the Mississippi River separates Buffalo County and Minnesota, commuter routes to Minnesota are limited to highways with a bridge across the river. There are only two highways in Buffalo County providing access across the river into Minnesota. These are Highway 54, to the City of Winona, Minnesota and Highway 25 to the City of Wabasha, Minnesota. Most Buffalo commuters working in Minnesota are getting to work using Highway 54 into Winona. As proof of this, county-wide, 25 percent of workers take less than 10 minutes to get to work each morning. Meanwhile, only 12 percent of workers coming from Fountain City, Wisconsin take less than 10 minutes to get to work each day. Workers in that part of Buffalo County are likely heading south to the Highway 54 bridge, so that they can cross over into Minnesota for employment. There are several possible reasons for Buffalo County's large number of commuters. On average, wages paid by employers in the Winona, Minnesota area have been and continue to be higher than wages for similar positions in Buffalo County. Buffalo County does not have a large manufacturing sector, so workers seeking manufacturing jobs are likely heading east into the Trempealeau County area.

## Buffalo County Employment Change by Industry 1994 to 1999



	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1 year	5 year
<b>Total</b>	4,181	4,184	4,390	4,454	4,525	4,605	1.8%	10.1%
<b>Goods Producing</b>	373	406	459	484	478	466	-2.4%	25.0%
Construction & Mining	55	85	110	124	122	127	4.6%	133.0%
Manufacturing	319	320	348	360	356	339	-4.8%	6.5%
Durable	119	115	130	146	138	135	-2.2%	13.7%
Nondurable	200	206	219	215	218	204	-6.4%	2.2%
<b>Service Producing</b>	3,808	3,778	3,932	3,970	4,047	4,139	2.3%	8.7%
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	1,280	1,283	1,367	1,398	1,405	1,512	7.6%	18.1%
Total Trade	737	768	768	747	762	802	5.2%	8.8%
Wholesale	191	198	200	209	197	185	-6.2%	-3.4%
Retail	546	570	569	538	565	617	9.1%	13.1%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	137	141	140	143	147	145	-1.3%	5.5%
Services & Misc.	797	845	851	800	816	785	-3.8%	-1.4%
Total Government	857	742	806	882	916	895	-2.3%	4.4%

Source: WIDWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, Nonfarm Wage & Salary estimates.

Nonfarm wage and salary employment measures the number of jobs within a county excluding farming, military, and self-employed workers. This data measures the number of jobs within the county without consideration of where the job-holder lives. Numerous Buffalo County residents commute outside of the county to their jobs; this is a significant reason why the number of residents living in Buffalo that are employed was 3,200 larger than the number of jobs located within the county during 1999. An additional reason for the difference between the size of Buffalo's resident employment number and the number of Nonfarm jobs is that Buffalo still has a significant number of people farming. Individual farmers are tallied in the labor force statistics for Buffalo County (detailed on the bottom of page 2), but not in the Nonfarm employment levels detailed on this page.

At first glance, it may appear that the sizable growth rate in construction holds the key to economic activity in the last five years in Buffalo County. However, the 133 percent change in construction represents a modest change of 70 jobs in the total number of employed in construction in Buffalo County. The transportation, communications, and public utility division has been the driving force of the Buffalo County economy during the 90s. While posting just modest growth in the five years detailed above, that division has added about 500 workers during the 90s decade, better than a 50 percent growth rate during the decade.

# Buffalo County's Largest Industries and Employers

## Top 10 Industry Groups

Industry Group	March 2000		Numerical Change	
	Employers	Employment	1 Year	5 Years
Trucking And Warehousing	*	*	*	*
Educational Services	4	474	23	46
Health Services	17	351	-13	3
Eating And Drinking Places	35	331	17	66
Social Services	7	189	56	34
Food And Kindred Products	6	182	-4	24
Executive, Legislative, And General	22	147	0	6
Engineering & Management Services	8	137	-12	108
Wholesale Trade-Durable Goods	13	123	5	14
Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	*	*	*	*

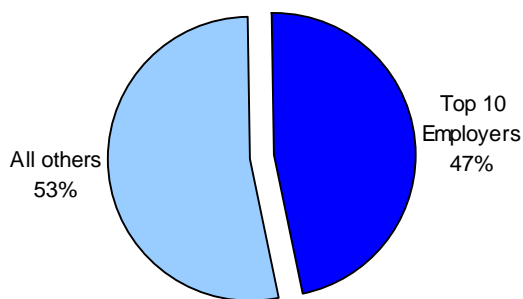
\*data suppressed to maintain confidentiality

## Top 10 Private Employers

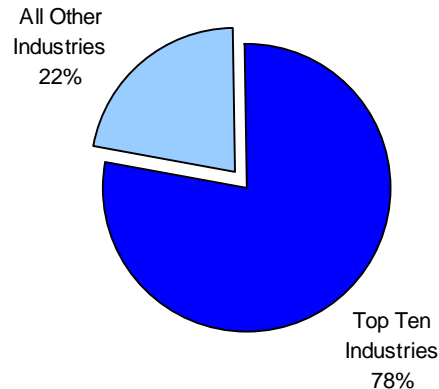
Company	Product or Service	Size
Marten Transport	Over-The-Road Trucking	1000+
American Lutheran Homes	Nursing and Personal Care Provider	100-249
Dairyland Power	Electric Power Services	100-249
Midwest Dental Care Mondovi	Dental Care Provider	50-99
La Crosse Milling	Animal Feed	50-99
Countryside Coop	Hardware Store	50-99
Gemini Employee Leasing	Individual & Family Services	50-99
Buffalo Lumber & Tie	Sawmill	50-99
Saint Michaels Evangelical Lutheran	Nursing Home	50-99
Foremost Farms USA Coop	Cheese Processing	20-49

Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information Bureau, ES-202 file tape, 1st quarter 1999 and LMI benchmark 2000.

Top 10 Private Employers Share of Nonfarm Employment



Top 10 Industry Groups Share of Nonfarm Employment



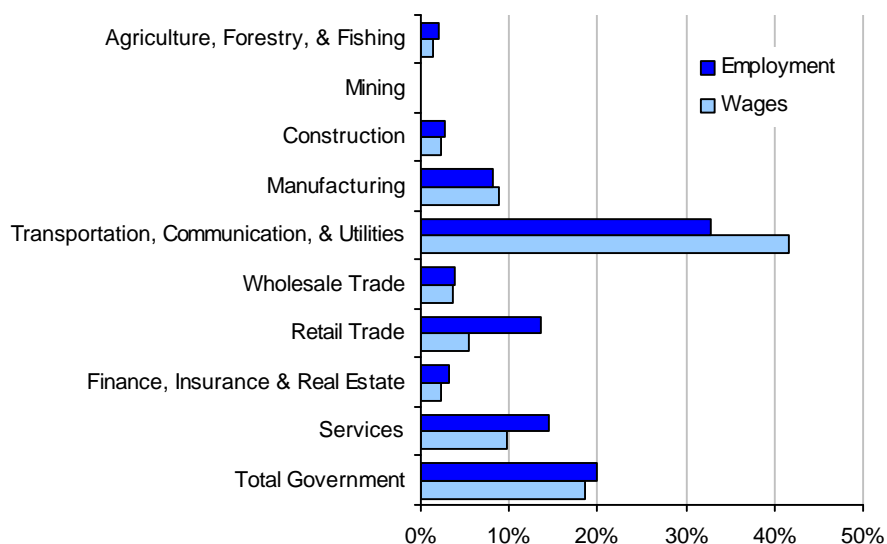
There was a total of 351 employers in Buffalo County in the first quarter of 2000. The top ten employers employ just over half of workers working in Buffalo County. Buffalo County's top ten industries are responsible for a higher percentage of total employment than in an average Wisconsin County, employing three out of every four workers in Buffalo County.

Except for Marten Transport, Buffalo County employers are smaller in size than what is found in many other Wisconsin Counties. Many Buffalo County employers are involved in providing services, public education, retail trade in the form of restaurant and bars, and general government administration.

## Buffalo County Employment and Wages 1999

	Annual Average Wage	State Average Wage	Percent of State Average	Percent change 1 year	Percent change 5 year	Number of Workers
All Industries	\$27,257	\$29,609	92.1%	0.3%	19.3%	4,566
Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	\$16,407	\$21,499	76.3%	35.5%	-29.8%	96
Mining	*	\$39,968	*	*	*	*
Construction	\$22,550	\$36,772	61.3%	0.1%	26.7%	123
Manufacturing	\$29,520	\$37,773	78.2%	4.6%	28.2%	375
Transportation, Communications, & Utilities	\$34,523	\$34,523	100.0%	*	-3.1%	1,500
Wholesale Trade	\$25,048	\$38,048	65.8%	-10.6%	20.8%	176
Retail Trade	\$10,980	\$15,066	72.9%	5.7%	32.8%	617
Finance, Insurance, & Real estate	\$19,691	\$37,911	51.9%	0.1%	12.5%	148
Services	\$18,151	\$26,041	69.7%	-3.8%	18.7%	666
Total Government	\$25,198	\$32,017	78.7%	-2.5%	26.3%	911

Total Employment and Wage Distribution by Industry Division



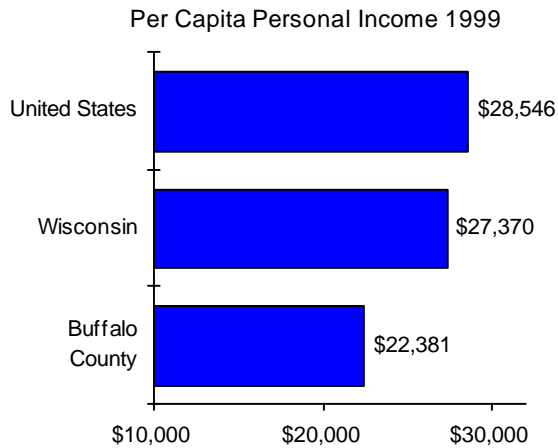
Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, *Employment, Wages and Taxes Due covered by Wisconsin's U.C. Law, Tables 209-211*.

In Buffalo County, all major industry divisions (except transportation) pay average annual average wages lower than the statewide average. The largest discrepancy appears in the finance, insurance and real estate industry (FIRE). Typically, major FIRE operations center around metropolitan areas, of which, Buffalo County has none. In addition, most of the major FIRE operations in Wisconsin take place in the eastern or south central parts of the state. Western Wisconsin's financial institutions are often headquartered in Minnesota.

Manufacturing's share of employment and percent of wages paid in Buffalo County are almost identical, unlike numerous counties, where manufacturing wages paid often exceed the percentage of employment in manufacturing. At 8.2 percent of total county employment, Buffalo's manufacturing employment share is the lowest in the eight county area commonly referred to as Western Wisconsin, and one of the lowest percent shares of manufacturing employment in the state of Wisconsin.

Retail trade employment represents 13.5 percent of employment, yet only 5.4 percent of the wages paid in Buffalo County. The wages in the retail trade industry division represent a significantly smaller proportion of total wages than employment, because the industry employs a large number of entry-level workers and much of the work is part-time.

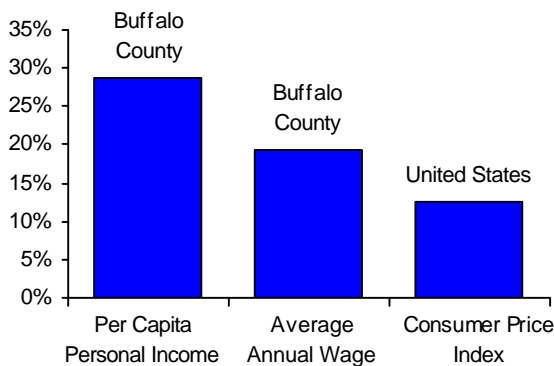
## Buffalo County Wage and Income Data



Per capita personal income (PCPI) is total income divided by the total number of residents. Income includes wages earned, dividends from investments, and transfer payments from the government. Per capita income can be influenced by the participation rate, average family size, and the median age of the residents. Per capita income can influence the type of services and housing available within a county.

Over the past five years, Buffalo County PCPI has increased by 28.7 percent and wages earned in Buffalo County have increased by 19.3 percent. The state's PCPI increased 26.1 percent and the national PCPI increased 26.4 percent during the 1994-1999 time period.

Comparison of Selected Data: 1994 - 1999



Buffalo's 8.8 percent change from 1997 to 1998 almost doubled the state and national increase rate for the same time period. Buffalo's PCPI in 1997 had declined by 300 dollars as compared to 1996. In a 1996 study, Buffalo was one of only four counties with more than 40 percent of total employment in farm or farm related jobs. In counties with a strong farming base, measures of PCPI are more volatile because farming income is subject to fluctuations and potential losses. According to data from the US Department of Commerce, 1997 was a very bad year for Buffalo County farmers.

Per Capita Personal Income

							Percent Change	
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1 year	5 year
United States	\$22,581	\$23,562	\$24,651	\$25,874	\$27,321	\$28,546	4.5%	26.4%
Wisconsin	\$21,699	\$22,573	\$23,554	\$24,791	\$26,227	\$27,370	4.4%	26.1%
Buffalo County	\$17,393	\$18,174	\$20,123	\$19,826	\$21,779	\$22,381	2.8%	28.7%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System.

Selected Occupational Wage Data

	Mean	Median
Assemblers, Electronic	\$ 10.08	\$ 9.24
Assemblers, General	\$ 10.79	\$ 11.08
Amusement & Recreation Attendants	\$ 7.45	\$ 6.92
Cashier	\$ 6.99	\$ 6.74
Cook, Restaurant	\$ 9.36	\$ 8.39
Food Preparation Worker	\$ 6.97	\$ 6.62
Hotel/Motel Clerk	\$ 7.47	\$ 7.39
Janitor/Cleaner	\$ 9.50	\$ 9.14
Machine Feeder & Offbearer	\$ 9.49	\$ 9.47
Nurse Aide/Orderly	\$ 9.24	\$ 9.10
Production Worker - Helper	\$ 10.73	\$ 10.26
Registered Nurse	\$ 21.21	\$ 20.21
Truck Driver, Light	\$ 10.32	\$ 9.97
Truck Driver, Tractor Trailer	\$ 16.72	\$ 15.72
Vehicle Washer/Equipment Cleaner	\$ 8.83	\$ 8.24

Source: DWD, BWI, 2000 OES wage survey for Balance-Of-State (non-MSA) counties.

The wages for the selected occupations in this table were reported by employers in non-metropolitan counties in the state who responded to the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) survey. Employers from all Wisconsin counties participated in the survey but published data was limited to MSAs and a grouping of 60 or so 'balance-of-state' non-MSA counties.

Wages play a critical role in the economy as both workers and employers try to capitalize their worth. The labor shortage has placed additional pressure on wages and those occupations with a mean (average) and median (mid-point) wage relatively close reflect that. Mean wages include both very low and high wages, but as the labor mark tightens employers offering low wages migrate closer to the mid-point.